

## Tracking Health in Your Community

*One year after launch, the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network expands its reach and resources to better help protect the nation's health.*



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If protecting your family's health from the effects of the environment were as simple as doing a Google search would you try it? If your answer is "Yes!" the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network) is just what you need. Information on the Tracking Network can help you protect your health.

The Tracking Network pulls together environmental and health data into one national on-line system. With the tap of a few computer keys, you can find out about the water you drink and the air you breathe – how do they compare to the counties around you? What can you do to limit your exposure to things like smog? You can learn about asthma rates where you live and see if they are higher or lower than other parts of your state.

A doctor or a nurse can use the Tracking Network to warn patients about high levels of lead or carbon monoxide poisoning within their state and what they can do to help prevent those problems in their family.

A new home buyer could use the Tracking Network to research water quality problems in a certain area of town. "CDC's Tracking Network is the most important accomplishment of the past decade," said Thomas Burke, Ph.D., associate dean of Public Health Practice and Training and professor in Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the Tracking Network more than a year ago. Since then, the Tracking Network has added more information about environmental hazards such as air and water contaminants, and chronic health conditions such as asthma and cancer.

U.S. Census Bureau data on population characteristics are another big addition to the Tracking Network. These data give us insight into possible links between the environment and sex (gender), age, race, and ethnicity. Socioeconomic information such as poverty level, work, education, and income are also included. Although hard to measure, some research shows that these factors can play a part in your exposure to environmental hazards. With Tracking Network data, scientists can get a clearer picture of the factors that control environmental exposures and human health across the United States. You can also learn how

contaminants such as lead in drinking water relate to premature birth or about air pollution and its relationship to asthma.

During the past year, public health officials used state tracking networks to identify growing asthma and lead-poisoning rates. They also found areas where drinking water was likely contaminated. As a result, steps were taken to protect and educate people about environmental hazards that could make them sick. Using the Tracking Network made decisions about public health actions both faster and easier.

The Tracking Network's reach has grown to include 23 [states](#). Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, South Carolina, and Vermont have joined the 16 states and New York City that were already tracking and reporting environment and health data. CDC aims for all 50 states to have Tracking Networks. Four federal agencies help provide data and expertise for Tracking Network development:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- National Cancer Institute
- U.S. Geological Survey

Plans are to add new data to the Tracking Network, including information about climate change, asthma prevalence, community design, and new searching and display tools.

#### Health Data on the Tracking Network

- Asthma
- Birth defects
- Cancer
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Childhood lead poisoning
- Heart attacks
- Pregnancy issues and birth outcomes

#### Environmental Data on the Tracking Network

- Air quality
- Built environment (coming soon)
- Climate change (coming soon)
- Community water
- Well water
- Housing

#### Other Data on the Tracking Network:

- Population Characteristics

Visit CDC's Tracking Network at

[www.cdc.gov/ephrtracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephrtracking). For more information on

other environmental public health issues, visit

[www.cdc.gov/nceh](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh).

